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ABSTRACT

A study investigated the effects of quality children's literature on positive social behaviors in the classroom. A third grade class of 20 students and their classroom teacher were surveyed on eight positive social behaviors of responsibility, honesty, courage, work value, self-discipline, compassion, and friendship and loyalty, which are reflected in quality children's literature. After each topic on the eight positive social behaviors was introduced, quality fiction for children was read and discussed, and students were given daily activities to practice the positive social behaviors demonstrated in the literature. The students were then given a self-management survey. Data were analyzed using t-test of independent means. Results indicated that there was a significant difference in positive social behaviors demonstrated by third-grade students when read children's literature with positive social behaviors. (Includes one table of data and three figures--the survey, a list of the fiction used, and suggested extension activities; contains seven references.) (Author/NKA)

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HOW CHILDREN'S LITERATURE AFFECTS POSITIVE SOCIAL BEHAVIOR OF THIRD GRADE STUDENTS AT A SELECTED ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of quality children's literature on positive social behaviors in the classroom. A third grade class of 20 students and their classroom teacher were surveyed on eight positive social behaviors of responsibility, honesty, courage, work value, self-discipline, compassion, friendship and loyalty, which are reflected in quality children's literature. After each topic on the eight positive social behaviors was introduced, children's literature read, discussed and students given daily activities to practice the positive social behaviors demonstrated in the literature, the students were given a self-management survey.

Data were analyzed using t-test of independent means. Results indicated that there was a significant difference in positive social behaviors demonstrated by third grade students when read children's literature with positive social behaviors.

Introduction

> Good literature, whether for the old or young readers, bears the mark of truth and integrity; it carries the reader along into genuine, if vicarious, experience; it stirs his emotions, arouses his curiosity, stimulates his mind, and gives him a measuring stick for living (Adams, 1953, 7).

Quality children's literature has the potential to change attitudes, values, ethical consciousness and provide personal enrichment. Children's literature which portrays positive social behavior can be an excellent guide for children. Kann, (1992) indicated that language, concepts and skills were related to children's exposure to quality literature. The language, concepts and skills derived from quality literature, enables the ability for ethical decision making from our youth.

Egoff (1973) investigated the differences in quality of children's literature and how it affected children's positive social behavior. Her study indicated that the influence of a good book uplifts and increases awareness while an average book has no influence on children.

On the same lines, Eeds and Hudelson (1995) contended that literature should be the main focus for children both in public education as well as their personal lives. Quality literature that is reinforced daily gives students the opportunity to assess similar situations critically as well as anticipate opportunities for the future.

Quality children's literature has been found to play a major role in multi-cultural education. Cowin (1988) showed that when elementary students were exposed to children's quality literature, were able to perceive other students form other cultures more favorably.

Though quality literature is in abundance, Martin (1995) observed that very few schools have used it to influence positive social behaviors. Martin suggested

that teachers should use literature as a part of the solution to the current life crisis situations in schools.

Method

Subjects

The subjects for this study consisted of 20 students from a third grade class.

Data Collection Instruments

The data were collected through a self-management survey designed by the researcher and completed by both the regular classroom teacher and the subjects before introduction of children's quality literature. A journal of observation was kept by the researcher recording classroom behavior during the eight weeks of the study. The Self-Management weekly survey was filled out eight times by the students each time a topic on eight specific areas of social behavior was introduced and quality children's literature implemented. The self-management survey rated specific areas of social behavior: did they demonstrate helpfulness to others; did the students practice self-discipline in completing assignments; did they work independently; did they respect peers and their property; did they respect authority; did they accept the responsibility for their misbehavior. The regular classroom teacher filled out the same survey rating the social behavior of the student after the introduction of quality children's literature . The data were used to compare the classroom behavior before and after exposure to quality children's literature, and daily activities designed to enhance social behaviors targeted in this study. The self- management survey, selected literature and daily activities are displayed in figure 1, 2, and 3 respectively.

Analysis

Data analysis focused on measures of central tendency and dispersion. T-test for dependent means was used to test one null hypothesis while descriptive measures were used to describe the effects of literature on positive social behaviors.

Results

The following research questions served to guide the analysis of the data that were collected in this study. All data were statistically analyzed at .05 level of significance.

Research questions:

Research question 1: Is there a significant difference in the positive social behaviors of third grade students when they are exposed to quality children's literature and when they are not?

Research question 2: How does the study of children's literature affect the third grade students positive social behaviors of responsibility, honesty, work values, self-discipline, compassion, friendship, courage, and loyalty?

Table 1 presents students view of themselves and how they handled themselves prior to and after exposure to quality children's literature. The results indicate that when students were exposed to quality children's literature, they exhibited more positive social behaviors than when they are not.

When the effects of quality children's literature on positive social behaviors of responsibility, honesty, work values, self-discipline, compassion, friendship, courage, and loyalty, were analyzed from the journal observations, the results indicated that the subjects applied the eight positive social behaviors in regards to their classroom assignments and school time behaviors. Throughout the study, the subjects were seldom called down for inappropriate behavior related to the eight behaviors being observed.

Table 1

Means and t-test on pre and post exposure to children's literature

Methods	M	SD	t-value
Pre literature exposure	30.60	2.70	3.10*
Post literature exposure	35.60	1.81	

Note: P < .05.

Figure 1. Children's Literature 8

Behavior Management Survey

Directions: Circle the number that best describes you in the given situation.

1 = Never 2 = Almost Never 3 = Half of the time
4 = Most of the time 5 = All of the time

1.	I try to complete my homework and hand it in on time.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	I try to be honest. (e.g.) during test, answering questions and talking to my friends.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	I follow directions given at school, (e.g.) Finish homework as it was assigned, do what teacher asks the first time.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	I keep my hands and feet to myself. (e.g.) When standing in line, during playtime, sitting at my desk.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	I can control my temper. (e.g.) during group games, when someone teases me, when I'm tired.	1	2	3	4	5
6.	I help other children and grown-ups when they need me. (e.g.) When the teacher, friend or parent asks for help	1	2	3	4	5
7.	I treat all people fairly. (e.g.) I am fair during games in organized sports and free playtime.	1	2	3	4	5
8.	I make friends with new students who come into the classroom.	1	2	3	4	5
9.	I show courage by standing up for what is right. (e.g.) Not letting others make fun of someone.	1	2	3	4	5
10.	I accept consequences of my misbehavior by not putting the blame on others.	1	2	3	4	5

11. I show loyalty to my friends by not talking about them behind their backs, making fun of them, and encouraging them when needed. 1 2 3 4 5

Figure 2. Children's Literature 10

Children's Literature Uses in the Study

Books used for Responsibility:

St. George and the Dragon, Retold by Berg Esenwein and Marietta Stockard
Which Loved Best, Joy Allison
The Silent Couple, Unknown
The Lion, Witch and the Waredrobe, C.S. Lewis

Books used for Honesty:

The Honest Woodsman, Adopted from Emile Poulsson
The Emperor's New Clothes, Hans Christian Anderson
Honest Abe, Retold by Horatio Alger
The Good Bishop, Adopted from Victor Hugo

Books used for Work Values:

Work While you Work, McGuffey's Primer
Mr. Meant - To, Benjamin Franklin
Frog and Locust, Aesop
Dust Under the Rug, Maud Lindsay
How the Camel Got His Hump, Rudyard Kipling

Books used for Self-Discipline:

Please, Alicia Aspinwall
John, Tom, and James, Unknown Author
The King and His Hawk, Retold by James Baldwin
Our Lips and Ears, Unknown Author
Little Fred, Unknown Author

Books used for Compassion:

Diamonds and Toads, Retold by Charles Perrault
The One Hundred Penny Box, Sharon Bell Mathis
Grandmother's Table, Grimm Brothers
Little Sunshine, Retold by Etta Austin Blaisdell and Mary Frances Blaisdell

Books used for Friendship:

The Bear and the Travelers, Aesop
Why Frog and Snake Never Play, Author Unknown
The Selfish Giant, Oscar Wilde

Books used for Courage:

Cowardly Clyde, Bill Pete
The Wee Wee Woman, Retold by James H. Van Sickle
The Leopards Revenge, Unknown Author

Books used for Loyalty:

Loyalty to a Brother, Walter MacPeek
America, Samuel Smith
Thunder Falls, Retold by Allan Macfarlan

Literature Extension Activities

Dramatizations
Pencil drawings
Story maps
Poetry
Songs
Constructed a literature time line
Journal entries
Constructed short stories
Clay figures of characters
Venn diagrams
Make homework schudules
Flip books
Brainstorm alternatives to bad behavior

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